

Medoc Mountain

Medoc Mountain is not really a mountain at all. Its highest point reaches an elevation of only 325 feet above sea level. It is, rather, the core of what was once a mighty range of mountains — Medoc Mountain is what remains after millions of years of erosion. The eroded peaks were formed by volcanic action during the Paleozoic Age, about 350 million years ago.

An elongated structure of biotite granite, Medoc Mountain has effectively routed the streams of the area around itself and has resisted the erosion typical of the surrounding lowlands. The park sits near the fall line, an area where the hard, resistant rocks of the foothills give way to the softer rocks and sediments of the coastal plain. The northern and western faces of Medoc Mountain have very steep slopes, dropping 160 feet over a distance of less than a quarter mile. Such rugged terrain is unusual for the eastern piedmont.

Medoc Mountain is cloaked in a forest of green, its trees masking the peak. There are no scenic panoramas, no distant views of a majestic pinnacle rising to the sky. Medoc Mountain State Park has a more intimate beauty, an allure that is meant to be explored and appreciated up close.



History Highlights

The mountain and surrounding land have long been used for agriculture. Once the property of Sidney Weller, a noted farmer and educator, the area was used for the cultivation of grapes in the 19th century. Weller produced a highly acclaimed wine, known as Weller's Halifax and is credited with developing the American system of grape culture and winemaking. Weller organized and operated an academy for area children and assisted with the development of the first North Carolina state fair in 1853. Following Weller's death in 1854, his land was sold to the Garrett family who named the mountain "Medoc," after a province in the Bordeaux region of France famous for its vineyards.

Weller's vineyards continued to produce into the early 20th century, but the land was later subdivided, sold and

used for the production of other crops. The vineyards disappeared and little trace of them remains. The high ridge and the slopes of Little Fishing and Bear Swamp creeks are the only places in the area that have not been extensively cultivated. A grist mill operated in the area until the late 19th century.

In the 1920s, a Boy Scout camp was built on the summit of the mountain and a few years later, lumbermen cut the mountain forest for timber. In the early 1930s, a deposit of molybdenum was discovered near the summit. Exploration of the site occurred then and again in the late 1960s, scarring the land though no significant mining operations took place. For many years, local residents used the area for hunting, horseback riding and hiking. Numerous old roads and trails passing through the woods are evidence that these forests have long been enjoyed.

In 1970, citizens proposed the creation of a state park in the area. In 1972, the Division of Parks and Recreation surveyed a five-county area for a suitable site and recommended Medoc Mountain. The Halifax Development Commission obtained a one-year option to purchase timber on the mountain from Union Camp, allowing the state time to acquire 2,300 acres of land to establish the park.

Camping

Tent and trailer camping: A hardwood forest bordering open fields is home to the family campground. The campground's sites are for tent or trailer camping and accommodate up to six persons each. Out of the campground's 34 sites, 12 have electric hookups and two are accessible. Campsites offer tent pads, tables and grills. The camping area is served by a washhouse with hot showers and toilets. Drinking water is nearby. Sites are available on a first-come basis, for a fee.

Group camping: Four group campsites accommodate up to 30 persons each. The area offers picnic tables and fire circles. The washhouse is also near the group camping area. Reservations are required for group camping and a modest fee is charged. Group camping facilities are closed from December 1 through March 15.

Hiking Trails

Scenic trails invite you to journey into the park's interior. Seven trails wander through a variety of terrain and provide more than ten miles of hiking. Most of the trails are easy or moderate in difficulty and trail scenery includes an artesian well, granite outcroppings and miniature rapids.

Winding along Little Fishing Creek, around the high ridge of Medoc Mountain and through the forests, the trails are the best way to appreciate the beauty and diversity of Medoc Mountain. See the park map for information on distance and difficulty.

Flora and Fauna

The wilderness character of Medoc Mountain is being restored through reforestation. Much of the land is in various stages of regrowth and the forests offer a sense of renewal. Old fields, once used for farming, are being reforested with herbaceous plants and young pines. In time, mature loblolly pine forests and then hardwood forests will reign.

Few plants grow beneath the dense stands of young pines but blueberries, pipsissewa and pink lady slipper persist. In areas of the park that were once heavily logged, mixed forests grow where stumps and understory vegetation were allowed to regenerate. Hardwoods, loblolly pines and shrubs are found together there and the forest will eventually resemble its original state.

Floodplain and lowland hardwood forest species grow along the creeks, especially thriving at the junction of Bear Swamp and Little Fishing creeks. Species of trees commonly found include sweet gum, river birch, ironwood and alder, as well as water, white and swamp chestnut oaks.

Soils near the creeks are rich and promote the growth of herbaceous plants including jewelweed, false Solomon's-seal, Mayapple and other wildflowers commonly associated with the Piedmont. Christmas, lady, cinnamon and broad beech ferns thrive in the area. Bluffs and ravines in the park are distinctive habitats with tulip trees and sweet gums growing in moist locales. American beech and mountain laurel are more prevalent on the steeper banks. Typically a highland species, mountain laurel is not usually found as far east as Medoc Mountain but a large concentration is found here.

Medoc Mountain attracts a variety of animals. The nocturnal southern flying squirrel nests in tree cavities in the forests. More common mammals include opossums, gray foxes and white-tailed deer. Water-loving mammals

such as river otter, muskrat and beaver reside near the creeks. Many animals, not often observed by visitors — including freshwater mussels, crayfish, salamanders, frogs, turtles and water snakes — make their homes in the park's creeks, streams and boggy areas. The rare Carolina mudpuppy, a large aquatic salamander found only in the Neuse and Tar river systems, has been seen in Little Fishing Creek.

Bring binoculars to enjoy the many birds that inhabit Medoc Mountain. Waterways attract wood ducks and fish-eating birds including green-backed herons, great blue herons and belted kingfishers. The calls of the red-tailed hawk, great horned and barred owls add music to the forests. Bob-whites, wild turkeys and nesting songbirds — brown thrashers, rufous-sided towhees and prairie warblers — thrive on the food provided by the park's old fields and young forests. Birds attracted by the mature hardwood forests include wood thrushes, red-eyed vireos and various woodpeckers.

Picnicking

Shady woods and an open meadow provide ideal spots for picnicking in the park. Thirty tables and eight grills offer a choice of picnic locations. Drinking water and restrooms are located nearby. The park's picnic shelter is equipped with tables, a fireplace and a drinking fountain. Use of the shelter is free of charge unless reservations are requested.

A ball and bat or a volleyball net may come in handy as the picnic area's adjacent open meadow is a great spot for group recreation activities. Some of the park's picnic facilities are wheelchair accessible.



Paddling

Bring your canoe or kayak to Little Fishing Creek and enjoy a pleasant journey. The creek flows through the park for about 2.5 miles and offers an opportunity to view the area from a different perspective. Perfect for beginning paddlers, the waters of Little Fishing Creek flow slowly and there are few obstacles along the way. Shallow water near rock outcrops may make portaging necessary at certain spots. Little Fishing Creek is accessible from the bridge on SR 1322, and a 1.5- to two-hour trip leads to a take-out point at the bridge on SR 1002. Contact park staff for information about water levels, as high water can create dangerous conditions. Paddlers should exercise caution and wear personal flotation devices at all times.

Fishing

Hook and line will bring rewards at Medoc Mountain. Little Fishing Creek is considered to be one of the cleanest streams in the state. Several species of game fish, including redbreast sunfish, bluegill, warmouth bass, largemouth bass and chain pickerel make fishing a popular pastime in the park. Anglers must have a current fishing license and obey all regulations of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

Nature's Classroom

Rangers hold regularly scheduled educational and interpretive programs about Medoc Mountain State Park. Contact the park office to arrange a special exploration of Medoc Mountain State Park for your group or class.

Educational materials about Medoc Mountain State Park have been developed for grades 4-6 and are correlated to North Carolina's competency-based curriculum in science, social studies, mathematics and English/language arts. The Medoc Mountain program introduces students to basic geologic processes, the Medoc Mountain region. Accompanying the program is a teacher's booklet and workshop, free of charge to educators.

Rules & Regulations

Make your visit a safe and rewarding experience. Many of our regulations are posted throughout the park for the protection of our visitors and the park. A complete list is available at the park office. Help preserve our natural resources by observing the following:

❑ The removal of any plant, animal, artifact or mineral is prohibited.

❑ Help maintain a clean environment for other visitors by placing trash in proper receptacles. State law requires aluminum cans to be placed in recycling containers.

❑ Firearms and fireworks are prohibited.

❑ The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

❑ North Carolina motor vehicle and traffic laws apply in the park.

❑ North Carolina state parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting or trapping is not permitted.

❑ Fishing is permitted only during park hours. Regulations of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission are enforced.

❑ Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet.

❑ Camping is allowed in designated areas by permit only.

❑ Fires are permitted only in designated areas.

For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, please remember these safety tips.

❑ Sometimes the creek may be dangerous for canoeing. Check with park staff for the water level before embarking on a canoe trip.

❑ Wear a life vest when canoeing.

❑ Stay on designated hiking trails to avoid drop-offs and slick areas along creeks and streams.

❑ Venomous snakes, ticks and poison ivy may be encountered along park trails. Be alert.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or for an explanation of park rules.

Welcome!

Should the humdrum of nine-to-five leave you with the urge to travel and explore, head to Medoc Mountain State Park. A pleasurable excursion awaits just a 1.5-hour drive from the Research Triangle.

At Medoc Mountain, you will welcome tranquility and enjoy a chance to embrace the outdoors. Trails beckon as light filters through branches overhead and falls on paths that hold the promise of new frontiers. The peacefulness gives the opportunity to refresh. The silence of the forest is broken only by bird songs and the occasional drumming of the pileated woodpecker.

Grab your hiking boots. Load your camera. Spend some time at Medoc Mountain State Park and let nature renew your spirit.



Information

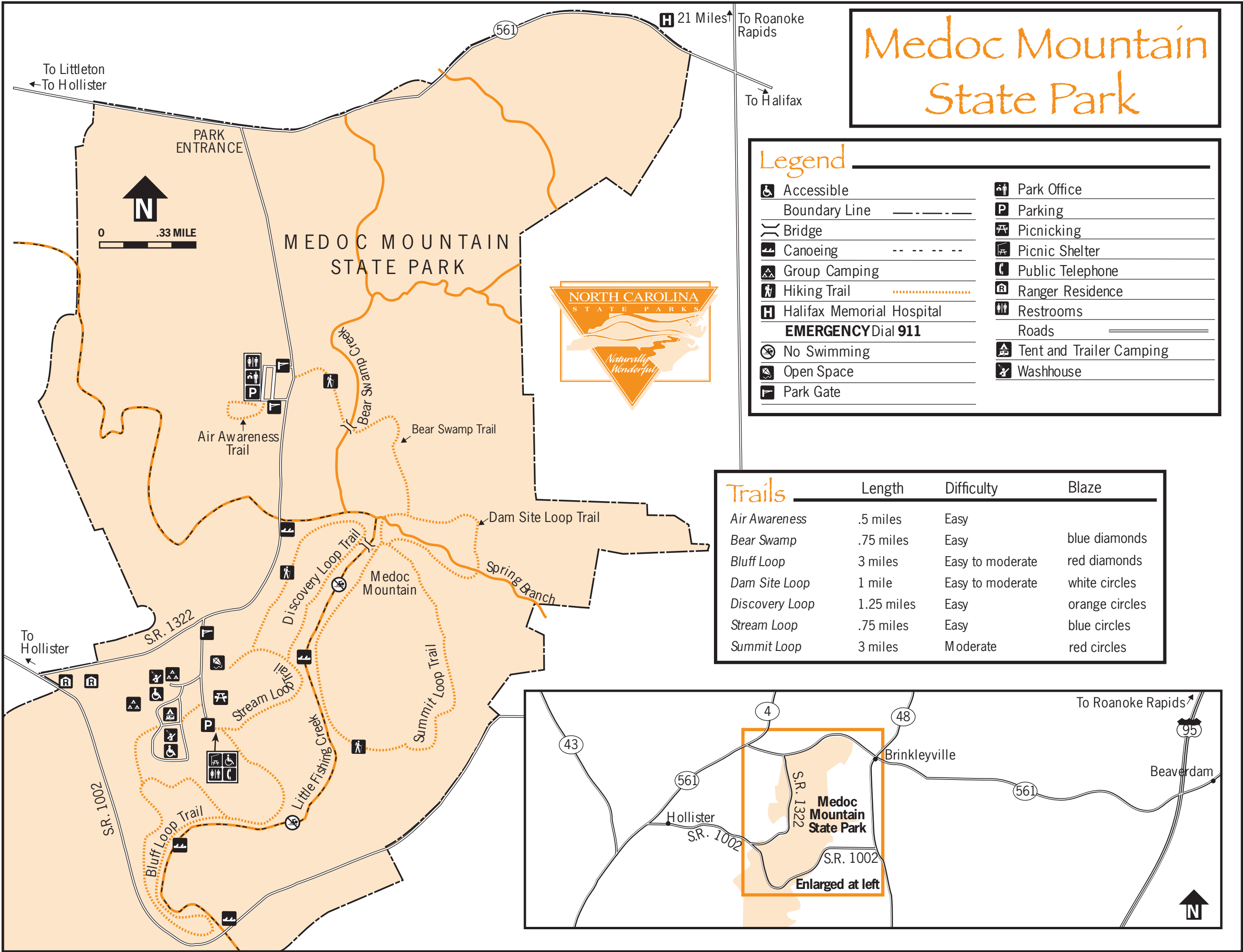
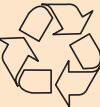
To learn more about Medoc Mountain State Park, contact:

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Hollister, NC 27844
(252) 586-6588
denr.dpr.medoc.mountain@lists.ncmail.net
www.ncparks.net

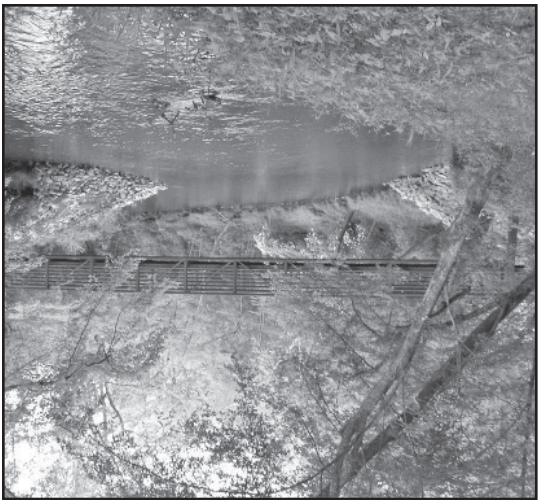
Discover other North Carolina state parks and recreation areas, contact:

N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources
1615 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27611-1615
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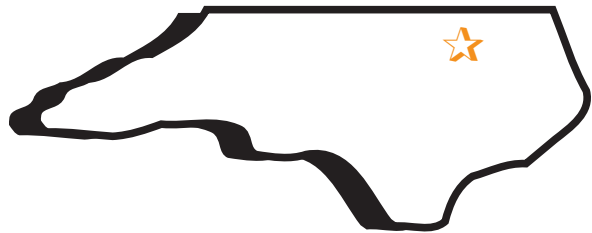


N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Department of Environment and Natural Resources



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Medoc Mountain State Park is located in Halifax County, 21 miles southwest of Roanoke Rapids, 23 miles north of Rocky Mount and 26 miles northeast of Louisburg on SR 1322. Off I-95, take exit 160 at N.C. 561 and travel nine miles to the park.

Park Hours

November - February 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
March - May, September & October 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
June - August 8 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Closed Christmas Day